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STATEMENT BY
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE OPEN DEBATE ON THE SITUATION
IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION
AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
NEW YORK, 20 JANUARY 2014

Mr. President,

Allow me to join the others in welcoming His Excellency Nasser Judeh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Jordan, to New York. I would also take this opportunity to convey my congratulations to you and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, on assuming the Presidency of the Security Council for this month, as well as for convening this important open debate in the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. My delegation also expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his earlier briefing. Malaysia associates itself with the statement by Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and with the statement by Djibouti on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

Mr. President,

2. My delegation wishes to thank the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, for his briefing to the Security Council. We take this opportunity, in conjunction with the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to reiterate our support for the State of Palestine. The launch of the International Year of Solidarity last week only strengthens the legitimacy of the Palestinian people's struggle against the illegal occupation by Israel. Yet, the question of Palestine remains unresolved on the agenda of this Council. What we have observed so far only emphasizes that a just and lasting solution is long overdue.

3. Malaysia reiterates our commitment to the realization of a two-State solution, based on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. We continue to call on all parties to live up to their obligations under internationally recognised initiatives such as the Arab Peace Initiative, the Oslo Accords, the Quartet Road Map, the Madrid Terms of Reference, and relevant Security Council resolutions. We further recognise the tireless efforts of US Secretary of State John Kerry to facilitate the resumption of direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel.

4. However, instead of adhering to the principles of the aforementioned initiatives, Israel continues its defiance against the wishes of the international community. Secretary Kerry's efforts have been met with ridicule by Israel, while European Union ambassadors to Israel have been summoned for rightly speaking out against illegal settlements. It is clear to us that this intransigence will lead to the failure of the talks, which already appear to us as one-sided against Palestine. The discussions on core issues must not be compromised nor delayed. We fear that the window of opportunity for a peaceful resolution is in danger of closing altogether, as the occupying Power has proven it is unwilling to meet all its commitments. In this regard, Malaysia strongly condemns the announcement of new settlement activities by Israel, and we demand a resolute end to this continued illegal practice. Settler's violence against Palestinians including destroying their agricultural land and places of worship continues unabated.

5. Malaysia also remains gravely concerned on the situation in Gaza, where the illegal blockade continues to suppress the lives of its citizens. The escalation of Israel's military activities in recent days further threatens to exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation. The food and energy security needs of the people remain at critical levels, while farmers and fishermen in the security zone are denied their livelihood by the occupying Power. As Vice-Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, Malaysia has seen and heard more than enough evidence of this oppression. We call for an immediate end to the blockade, as well as all other illegal Israeli practices in the Gaza Strip.

Mr. President,

6. Let me now turn to the situation in Syria, where the international community faces an ever-increasing humanitarian crisis. As a demonstration of our concern, Malaysia participated in the Second International Humanitarian Pledging Conference on Syria last week in Kuwait, where we pledged USD 500,000. We continue to urge all parties to end the violence and human rights violations, including against innocent civilians. While we welcome the recent delivery of aid to Palestinian refugees in UNRWA camps in Yarmouk, we remain particularly concerned that they continue to face unbearable human suffering. All responsible parties must allow for the appropriate measures to be taken to ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided to those desperately in need.

7. In two days, the long-awaited Geneva conference on Syria will commence, to follow up on the 30 June 2012 Communiqué. Malaysia remains supportive of the efforts of the Secretary-General and Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, and call on all parties to come together and work towards a political solution which is Syrian-led and inclusive. Military gains on the battlefield should not be translated into negotiating positions on the diplomatic front. We hope that the concerned parties will be able to put aside their differences in order to ensure a viable and sustainable outcome which will benefit the people of Syria.

8. With regards to the occupied Syrian Golan, Malaysia reiterates our objections on Israel's actions, including the construction and expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, which violate international law and the UN Charter. In this regard, Malaysia calls for the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan, in line with Security Council resolutions 242(1967), 338(1973) and 497(1981).

Mr. President,

9. Malaysia continues to be concerned on the effects of the conflict in Syria spilling into the borders of its neighbours. We express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for Jordan's generosity in hosting Syrian refugees despite the tremendous cost this has incurred.

10. However, the spill-over effects of the Syrian conflict to Lebanon continue to escalate. Malaysia urges the parties involved in this conflict to cease cross-border fire and other violence. My delegation also reiterates that Israel must cease its violations of Lebanese sovereignty and other hostilities, and withdraw its troops from Lebanon, with full respect for the Blue Line, in line with Security Council resolution 1701(2006).

Mr. President,

11. In conclusion, Malaysia underlines its firm belief in a moderate approach to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, which can bridge differences and restore stability to the Middle East. Whether in the Palestine-Israeli negotiations, or the streets of Beirut, or even at the Geneva II negotiating table, the voices of moderation must prevail against the voices of those who espouse hate, ignorance, violence and extremism. The debates of this august Council on the situation in the Middle East have to pave the way to an end to the immediate suffering of the affected peoples in this region. We should summon the collective political will to commit to a moderate cause, which will secure greater gains than if we were divided by conflict.

Thank you Mr. President.